

1 AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

2 1-11(Canceled)

3 12. (Previously presented) A device including:

4 (a) a shaft having at least one flexible portion along its length between a proximal end
5 and a distal end;

6 (b) at least two longitudinally bendable pulling and/or pushing elements, the at least
7 two pulling and/or pushing elements each extending to the proximal end of the
8 shaft and each acting on the shaft in an axial direction of the shaft at locations
9 spaced apart from the proximal end of the shaft further than at least part of the at
10 least one flexible portion; and

11 (c) a fixing device located in a fixed position with respect to the shaft adjacent to the
12 proximal end of the shaft, the fixing device having each of the at least two pulling
13 and/or pushing elements extending there through, and being adapted to reside
14 alternatively in a releasing position in which the pulling and/or pushing elements
15 are unsecured to the fixing device and are substantially free to move axially there
16 through, or a locking position in which each pulling and/or pushing element is
17 fixed in place with respect to the fixing device.

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19 13. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 wherein the shaft comprises a leaf spring
20 having a ring-shaped cross-section.

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22 14. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 wherein each pulling and/or pushing
23 element comprises a rope which is substantially rigid in its longitudinal direction.

1 15. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 wherein each pulling and/or pushing
2 element is received within a respective guide element within the shaft so as to be slidable
3 longitudinally with respect to the respective guide element.
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5 16. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 wherein the pulling and/or pushing
6 elements are mounted in the shaft at an inner circumference of the shaft.
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8 17. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 wherein each pulling and/or pushing
9 element acts upon the shaft in such a way that it is limited to pulling and pushing
10 directions for the respective pulling and/or pushing element.
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12 18. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 further including two lateral guides
13 extending longitudinally inside the shaft on opposite sides thereof, each lateral guide
14 being fixed to the shaft along at least a portion of the length of the respective lateral
15 guide.
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17 19. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 wherein the shaft includes an interior
18 longitudinal channel.
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20 20. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 19 further including an optical light guide or
21 an optical image guide extending within the channel.
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1 21. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 wherein the pulling and/or pushing
2 elements are arranged in pairs with each pulling and/or pushing element in a respective
3 pair engaging the shaft in the axial direction at substantially the same distance from the
4 proximal end of the shaft.

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6 22. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 12 wherein the pulling and/or pushing
7 elements are arranged symmetrically about the shaft.

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9 23. (Currently Amended) A device including:

10 (a) a shaft having at least one flexible portion along its length between a proximal end
11 and a distal end;

12 (b) at least two longitudinally bendable pulling and/or pushing elements, the at least
13 two pulling and/or pushing elements each extending to the proximal end of the
14 shaft and each acting on the shaft in an axial direction of the shaft at locations
15 spaced apart from the proximal end of the shaft; and

16 (c) a fixing device located at or adjacent to the proximal end of the shaft, the fixing
17 device in a releasing position leaving the pulling and/or pushing elements
18 unsecured to the fixing device so that [enabling] the pulling and/or pushing
19 elements [to] are substantially free to move axially [there] through the fixing
20 device to enable the shaft to be bent to a desired shape, and the fixing device in
21 [the] a locking position locking the [pushing] pulling and/or pushing elements in
22 place with respect to the fixing device to retain the shaft in the desired shape.

1 24. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 23 wherein the shaft comprises a leaf spring
2 having a ring-shaped cross-section.

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4 25. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 23 wherein each pulling and/or pushing
5 element is received within a respective guide element within the shaft so as to be slidable
6 longitudinally with respect to the respective guide element.

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8 26. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 23 further including two lateral guides
9 extending longitudinally inside the shaft on opposite sides thereof, each lateral guide
10 being fixed to the shaft along at least a portion of the length of the respective lateral
11 guide.

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13 27. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 23 wherein the shaft includes an interior
14 longitudinal channel.

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16 28. (Previously presented) A method for operating an endoscope-type device having a shaft
17 with at least one flexible portion along its length between a proximal end and a distal end
18 and at least two longitudinally bendable pulling and/or pushing elements, the at least two
19 pulling and/or pushing elements each extending to the proximal end of the shaft and each
20 acting on the shaft in an axial direction of the shaft at locations spaced apart from the
21 proximal end of the shaft, the method including the steps of:

- 1 (a) placing the at least two pulling and/or pushing elements in a condition in which
2 they are freely movable axially at the proximal end of the shaft and bending the
3 shaft to a desired longitudinally bent shape;
- 4 (b) with the shaft in the desired bent shape, placing the at least two pulling and/or
5 pushing elements in a condition in which they are in a fixed position prevented
6 from moving axially at the proximal end of the shaft to fix the shaft in the desired
7 bent shape;
- 8 (c) inserting the shaft into an inserted position in an orifice while the at least two
9 pulling and/or pushing elements are in the fixed position fixing the shaft in the
10 desired bent shape;
- 11 (d) with the shaft in the inserted position, placing the at least two pulling and/or
12 pushing elements in the condition in which they are freely movable axially at the
13 proximal end of the shaft; and
- 14 (e) moving the shaft from the inserted position in the orifice while the at least two
15 pulling and/or pushing elements are in the condition in which they are freely
16 movable axially at the proximal end of the shaft.

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18 29. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 28 wherein the step of moving the shaft
19 from the inserted position in the orifice includes adjusting the position of the shaft to a
20 different bent shape and further including the steps of:

- 21 (a) again placing the at least two pulling and/or pushing elements in the condition in
22 which they are prevented from moving axially at the proximal end of the shaft to
23 fix the shaft in the different bent shape;

- 1 (b) adjusting the position of the shaft in the orifice to an adjusted position;
- 2 (c) again placing the at least two pulling and/or pushing elements in the condition in
- 3 which they are freely movable axially at the proximal end of the shaft; and
- 4 (d) entirely withdrawing the shaft from the orifice while the at least two pulling
- 5 and/or pushing elements are in the condition in which they are freely movable
- 6 axially at the proximal end of the shaft.
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